



Mental Health Update May 18, 2007

Alternatives to Restraint and Seclusion Proposal

On May 11, DMH submitted a proposal for a State Incentive Grant to develop and implement plans at two hospitals to find alternatives to the use of restraint and seclusion. The proposal's abstract is as follows:

Proposal to Implement Alternatives to Restraint and Seclusion

The purpose of the project will be to improve mental health inpatient treatment by implementing alternatives to seclusion and restraint (S/R) at the Vermont State Hospital (VSH) for adults with serious mental illness and Retreat Healthcare (RHC) for children and adolescents with serious emotional disturbances. SAMHSA's Six Core Strategies to Reduce the Use of Seclusion and Restraint will guide the development of strategic plans at each hospital and will help create the culture shift necessary for the use of less coercive measures for ensuring patient and staff safety. The goals of the project are as follows:

- Goal 1:** Vermont will strengthen and enhance its oversight, leadership and coordination capacity at the state level and at VSH and RHC to enhance the development of alternatives to restraint and seclusion
- Goal 2:** Using the SAMSHA Six Core Strategies as a guide, Vermont will develop and implement a strategic plan to complete S/R Reduction efforts at VSH and the RHC.
- Goal 3:** Vermont will implement specific S/R Reduction Techniques (e.g. Sensory Modulation) at VSH and the RHC to reduce and prevent the need for S/R.

The full grant application can be viewed at:

<http://healthvermont.gov/mh/update/documents/samhsaproposal.pdf>

Division of Mental Health Holds Planning Retreat

On Tuesday, May 15, DMH staff members participated in a day-long retreat to identify the many operational and organizational issues that will need to be addressed as the Division moves toward becoming a newly restored Department of Mental Health. As called for by the recently enacted Act 15, the Department will have a Commissioner and will be expected to continue working with the Department of Health on issues related to the integration of health, mental health and substance abuse services. The retreat was attended by DMH staff from the Adult Unit, the Children's Unit, the Futures Team, VSH Leadership staff, Legal staff and VDH staff from the business office, research and statistics unit and the IT unit who work on mental health issues. Some of the issues identified included: the need for multi-stakeholder input process to craft an updated vision and mission statement; the organizational infrastructure supports necessary to ensure efficient and effective leadership and business functions; the need to actively recruit new

consumer and family members to serve on advisory committees and the need to continue and foster collaborative relationships that enhance the wellbeing of Vermonters with a variety of mental health and co-occurring conditions. The retreat served as an opportunity for Deputy Commissioner Michael Hartman to meet and interact with the entire staff and process past, present, and future challenges inherent in creating a new Department.

FUTURES PROJECT

Peer Services Work Group

This week members heard a presentation from the Stepping Stones peer resource center and crisis respite program. These services are peer-run and include a warm-line, a drop-in resource center, many educational and support services, and a crisis respite program. In addition, the group reviewed materials on the “peer specialist” program developed in Georgia. The federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is offering free technical assistance to states on setting up peer specialist services.

The work group faces the daunting challenge of narrowing the range of peer services that they have been considering into a list of actionable recommendations for the Futures Advisory Committee and Deputy Commissioner Michael Hartman.

Legislative Update

The legislature adjourned last weekend. Changes were made to the original legislation that set up the Futures planning process via the budget bill. In summary these changes are:

- The role of the Mental Health Oversight Committee is to ensure that there is a comprehensive continuum of mental health services and to assist and advise the primary committees of jurisdiction which have policy responsibility for the mental health services system;
- The Futures Advisory Committee is renamed to the Advisory Council for Mental Health Services Transformation. It will advise the Commissioner of Mental Health and shall include consumers and family members, and will cease to exist on July 1, 2009.
- The legislature authorizes up to \$100,000 to be spent on an independent study to review the Futures planning to date, to identify other options for replacing Vermont State Hospital, review the exclusion of federal payments to Institutes of Mental Disease, and to consider whether the current VSH can be certified.

The Futures Advisory Committee will meet June 4 from 2:00-4:30 as planned. At the meeting we will discuss ideas for moving forward.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 44 as of midnight Wednesday night.